

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, October 12, 1891, with transcript

Letter written by Alexander Graham Bell to his Mother. (Valuable — AGB describes his wife and early life in B. B.) GHG. Beinn Bhreagh, Cape Breton, N. S., October 12th, 1891. My darling Mama:

It won't be long now before we are in Washington for a brief visit. Mabel has gone wild over Europe — and talks of sailing for Italy upon the 28th of November — with the children — leaving me to follow in January — as I must be here during the month of December to superintend the selection of my sheep for the important experiment in breeding I have undertaken. She says — and very truly — that this winter affords the only opportunity for travel that will come to us for years. We have given up our Washington house and the new house will not be ready for occupancy for some months. Elsie education has been so neglected that next year she will have to be pushed ahead — and nothing must be allowed to take her away from her studies. Indeed Education must occupy the time of the children for some years now — so it is not likely that we can go abroad again for a long time.

Elsie needs a complete change in her life — and nothing I think could be better for her just now — than a visit to a foreign country — and a winter sojourn in a warm climate.

Both the children are old enough to profit by what they see. My only fear is letting them go without me.

Mabel however is very anxious to start off alone — and they propose sailing directly for Genoa on the 28th of November. 2 From there they would go to Florence and remain until I come.

They would take Charles with them — and secure a maid on the other side.

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Mabel is the most indefatigable woman I have ever seen. She is very much inclined to take a broad view of things — like her father — and she is a born organizer.

Her sewing classes for girls are doing a great deal for the people here. She has about 80 girls under instruction and they are really doing very fine work. A market has been secured in Montreal. Now she is hard at work over another plan. She wants to organize a Ladies Society or Club — something like the Literary Society of Washington.

The people here don't read much — and indeed there is no library. Mr. Kennan has made the first move for a public Library — and the plan is now fairly under weigh. Mabel thinks that the older people are set in their ways — and that it is not much use doing anything for them.

But the young people — the girls who have graduated from the High School — and the younger married people — could be influenced for good. I encouraged her to go on — and she called a meeting of Ladies here — last Saturday — not a meeting of the young people — but of their mothers etc. — and broached her plan to them. Mr. McCurdy and I kept out of the way — and she managed the meeting all by herself. She called the meeting to order — and then made a speech. Then she asked Miss McCurdy to read an address for her which she had prepared — suggesting the idea of the Club — and 3 requesting the opinions of all present. Considerable discussion ensued — and it was agreed upon all hands — that it would be a good thing for the young people — and a Club was decided upon. She has therefore invited the young ladies of Baddeck to meet here Thursday evening and organize the Club. They will ballot for officers and have their first Literary meeting.

Mrs. McKenzie (Maud Dunlap) is to read a paper upon the works of a Canadian Author — with extracts from her writings.

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Mrs. Bethune is to present in brief the news of the week — the chief events that have happened in the world outside of Canada — illustrating by means of a map; and Mrs. William McCurdy is to provide music. I will ask Mr. McCurdy to send you a copy of Mabel's address. It was very good — and would have done credit to anybody — I am quite proud of her.

Elsie and Daisy are improving every day. Elsie is nearly well and Daisy has reached the vomiting stage. The simple plan of relief I discovered has helped her so much — that she no longer dreads her attacks.

I have been hard at work upon Graphophone matters. I think the problem of multiplying Graphophone records is now fairly solved. I am nearing the end of the task I set myself — and then I can take up the improvement in the instrument itself. I have now completed the revision of two important lectures I gave at Lake George.

1. A lecture upon “The Thorax and Larynx”; and (2) another upon “The Pharynx and Mouth.” They are ready now to be cut to 4 pieces by papa! I will ask Mr. McCurdy to send the type-written copy to him.

Love to Papa and all at home — and a heartfelt to you.

Your affectionate son, Alec. Mrs. A. Melville Bell, 1525 — 35th Street, West Washington, D. C.